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## Book Reviews

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**Narratives of the Beginnings of Hebrew History.** By CHARLES FOSTER KENT. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904. Pp. xxxv + 382. \$2.75, net.

A commonly recognized need of the Old Testament student is a literary history of that section of the Bible. The science of biblical criticism has passed its empirical stage, and may now be regarded as capable of fairly precise statement, so far as its leading results are concerned. Upon details there will always be varieties of opinion, but the outstanding features of the discipline have ceased to be matters of debate. Accordingly, there is demanded a constructive presentation of the facts regarding the literature of the Old Testament; such a presentation as shall place at the disposal of the general student an arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures as far as possible in chronological order, with some trustworthy record of their sources and writers.

Professor Kent, of Yale, to whom students of Hebrew history and literature are already greatly indebted, has increased this obligation by the promise of a series of six volumes presenting successively the narratives of the beginnings of Hebrew history, historical and biographical narratives, prophetic sermons, epistles and apocalypses, laws and traditional precedents, songs, psalms, and prayers, and proverbs and didactic poems; thus covering the entire Old Testament, and such portions of the apocryphal books as seem worthy of inclusion in such a scheme.

The first volume of this series, which is to be entitled "The Student's Old Testament," has appeared, and discloses the plan and spirit of the entire work. It includes the books from Genesis to Ruth, and is divided into five sections, the first of which deals with the beginnings of human history (Gen. 1:1—11:9), and the remainder with the early periods of Hebrew history. The material is arranged in parallel columns to indicate the four chief sources—the Judean prophetic, the Ephraemitic prophetic, the late prophetic or deuteronomic, and the late priestly. At certain points these sources are separated into their clearly discernible elements, as in the case of the two Judean narratives in Joshua. These divisions are further illustrated by a table of classification, in which the relations of the different narratives and their sources may be seen at a glance.

The preface, which outlines the plan of the entire work, asserts that the purpose is

(1) to rearrange the writings of the Old Testament in logical order; (2) to indicate their approximate dates, the classes of writers from which they come, and the more important reasons for the critical analysis of the different books; and (3) to introduce the reader by means of a clear translation to the beauty and thought of the original.

The introduction to the present volume deals with Israel's oral traditions, their transmission and embodiment in literature, the form and contents of these early records, and the characteristics of the different sources which appear in this volume. Various devices are employed to classify the material of the text. Poetical passages are printed in broken lines, according to their structure. Editorial additions, explanatory clauses, the English equivalents of important Hebrew names, and words used to restore omitted or abridged narratives, are appropriately indicated. Copious footnotes give the author's reasons for the analysis and classification of the material. Appendices present a bibliography, lists of words peculiar to the different sources woven together in the narratives, Babylonian and other parallels to the Hebrew stories of primitive times, and notes upon other matters of interest. Naturally, considerable portions of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, together with the entire book of Leviticus, are not included in this volume, but are reserved for presentation in the one dealing with the laws.

In the preparation of a work covering so wide and important a field, there must arise repeatedly questions regarding the best method of procedure, and at such points opinions will differ. For example, it seems a mistake to employ the unscientific form "Jehovah" in a work which ought to be not only popular but exact. Professor Kent acknowledges his difficulty here and indicates his decision as only partially satisfactory, where a choice among evils was necessary. A more serious question arises regarding the position assigned to the early narratives of Genesis. It is clear that the materials of Gen. 1:1—11:9 are not regarded as sharing the historical character of the remainder of the narratives recorded in this volume. In the stories of the creation, the fall, the flood, and the dispersion of the races, "the concrete details are but the clothing of the primitive beliefs and ideals." It is a matter of great moment that the student should be assisted to distinguish between material which is of this character and that which rests upon a basis of fact. Strictly speaking, historical narratives begin only with the close of the eleventh chapter. The value of the earlier chapters consists in their ethical and religious teachings, not in

their narrative form. The plan which Professor Kent has chosen for the grouping of his material gave him an admirable opportunity to place these stories of primitive times where their true character would at once appear as prophetic discourses or priestly summaries. To put them in the forefront of the historical recitals, however modified that historical element may be in the interest of more important considerations, seems as little warranted as to begin the history of Germany with the *Nibelungenlied*, or that of England with the *Idylls of the King*.

But detail criticisms of this order must yield to a genuine admiration for the work as a whole. Its scholarly character, its conservative and constructive spirit, its admirable rendering of the text, its ample helps for proper interpretation, and its large promise of good things to come in the subsequent volumes, assure the reader that a most serviceable work has been added to the apparatus of biblical study.

H. L. W.

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**Words of Koheleth: Son of David, King in Jerusalem. Being the Book of Ecclesiastes.** By JOHN FRANKLIN GENUNG. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1904. Pp. xiv + 361. \$1.25, net.

The book of Koheleth is receiving its share of attention these days. Von Zapletal is just out with a brief discussion of the *Metrik* of the book, and Paul Haupt discusses it as *Weltschmerz in der Bibel*. Professor John Franklin Genung, who some years ago published an excellent literary study of Job, has presented his readers with a similar appreciation of the *Words of Koheleth*. The author, together with most modern students of the book, rightly discards the word "Ecclesiastes," the Greek translation of "Koheleth," in the first place because it is almost certainly an incorrect translation, and, in the second place, as the author appropriately observes, because it "entitles what is of all Scripture books the least ecclesiastical." Professor Genung describes the spirit and purpose of his work as constructive. "Such spirit by no means ignores or slights the critical; rather, it takes the critical in, on its way, as an outfit of insight in which also the author himself is concerned, and in whose light the problems historic, dogmatic, philological, or whatever else, assume the proportions essentially their due." He, with some caution, identifies Koheleth's chief grievance with the views of immortality current in his time. Hence his (Koheleth's) book, though it now gives the impression of being radical, of "speaking out in meeting," is really an expression of the older, more conservative, Hebrew spirit. Koheleth sees an element of danger in the current dis-